JOH-001

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

APPLICATION FOR LETTERS PATENT

INVENTOR:

Erling W. Johansen

TITLE:

APPARATUS FOR SUPPORTING ARTICLES IN A DESIRED ORIENTATION

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This U.S. Patent Application is based upon U.S. Provisional Patent Application Serial No. 60/459,997, entitled "APPARATUS FOR SUPPORT ARTICLES IN A DESIRED ORIENTATION", which was filed on April 4, 2003.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

The invention relates to an apparatus for supporting articles in any desired orientation. More particularly, the invention relates to an apparatus utilizing a teardrop- shaped, resiliently biased plastic member to support articles within a compartment.

2. Description of the Prior Art

Many devices have been developed for holding articles. In fact, the art is replete with devices for organizing and supporting objects. However, the vast majority of these devices are specifically designed for supporting an article in a predetermined orientation or supporting an article of a particular size or shape.

For example, article holding devices have been designed for supporting a picture and article holding devices have been designed for supporting a pencil.

However, such devices are generally mutually exclusive as the different shapes of a picture and a pencil dictate that they be supported in very different ways. As such, people often clutter their desks and other support surfaces with a variety of different article holding devices, each adapted for a specific purposed.

As such, a need currently exists for an article holding device that is readily adapted to hold a wide variety of objects. The present invention provides such an article holding device.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

It is, therefore, an object of the present invention to provide an article holding apparatus including a compartment having sidewalls and an open upper end. The apparatus also includes a resilient biasing member contained within the compartment. The biasing member extends between sidewalls of the compartment such that resilient energy stored within the biasing member holds an article in a fixed orientation between the biasing member and one of the sidewalls.

It is also an object of the present invention to provide an article holding apparatus wherein the compartment is rectangular and includes first and second lateral sidewalls.

It is another object of the present invention to provide an article holding apparatus wherein the biasing member extends between the first and second lateral sidewalls, and the biasing member is coupled to the first lateral sidewall and resilient energy stored within the biasing member holds an article in a fixed orientation between the biasing member and the second lateral sidewall.

It is a further object of the present invention to provide an article holding apparatus wherein the biasing member is substantially teardrop-shaped and includes a free first end forming the large diameter of the teardrop shape and a second end.

It is a further object of the present invention to provide an article holding

apparatus wherein the second end of the biasing member is secured to the first lateral sidewall adjacent an upper end of the compartment such that the free first end extends across the compartment toward the opposed second lateral sidewall.

It is yet another object of the present invention to provide an article holding apparatus wherein the compartment is shaped and dimensioned to sit upon a horizontal support surface.

It is also a further object of the present invention to provide an article holding apparatus wherein the biasing member is substantially teardrop-shaped.

It is still another object of the present invention to provide an article holding apparatus wherein the compartment is composed of plastic.

It is also an object of the present invention to provide an article holding apparatus wherein the biasing member is composed of plastic.

`It is a further object of the present invention to provide an article holding apparatus including a plurality of interconnected compartments, each compartment including sidewalls and an open upper end.

Other objects and advantages of the present invention will become apparent from the following detailed description when viewed in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, which set forth certain embodiments of the invention.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Figure 1 is a perspective view of the present invention including a single compartment.

Figure 2 is a detailed perspective view of the biasing member.

Figure 3 is a perspective view of an alternate embodiment of the present invention incorporating multiple compartments.

Figure 4 is a side view of the apparatus disclosed with regard to Figure 3.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

The detailed embodiment of the present invention is disclosed herein. It should be understood, however, that the disclosed embodiment is merely exemplary of the invention, which may be embodied in various forms. Therefore, the details disclosed herein are not to be interpreted as limited, but merely as the basis for the claims and as a basis for teaching one skilled in the art how to make and/or use the invention.

With reference to Figure 1, a single compartment article holding apparatus 10 is disclosed. As will be described below in greater detail, a variety of single compartment apparatuses may be combined to create a device capable of holding a greater number of articles at a variety of distinct locations.

The apparatus 10 includes a substantially rectangular compartment 12. The compartment includes a base wall 14, sidewalls 16, 18, 20, 22 and an open upper end 24. It is, however, contemplated that the compartment does not require a base wall as the support surface upon which it is placed may function as a base wall. It is also contemplated, and as shown in accordance with the embodiment disclosed in Figures 2 and 3, that the compartment may be constructed with less than four sidewalls so long as opposed walls are provided for the positioning of a resilient biasing member 26 therebetween.

In accordance with a preferred embodiment, the compartment 12 is shaped and

dimensioned to sit upon a horizontal support surface 28. However, and as the following disclosure will make readily apparent, the compartment 12 may be oriented in any desired orientation so long as it is fully supported by the support surface 28 on which it is placed. For example, the compartment 12 may be designed to hang from a vertically oriented surface, such as a wall, without departing from the spirit of the present invention.

The compartment 12 is constructed from substantially rigid plastic that may be readily molded into the rectangular compartment shape. However, and as those skilled in the art will certainly appreciate, other materials may be employed without departing from the spirit of the present invention. In addition, although a rectangular shape is disclosed in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention, the compartment 12 may be configured in a variety of shapes without departing from the spirit of the present invention.

The apparatus 10 includes a resilient biasing member 26 contained within the compartment 12. The resilient biasing member 26 is teardrop-shaped when viewed from the side and extends across the compartment 12 from the forward sidewall 20 of the compartment to the rear sidewall 16 of the compartment 12. While a teardrop shape is disclosed in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention, any shape capable of creating a biased holding structure as described below

could be employed without departing from the spirit of the present invention.

The biasing member 26 includes a free first end 30 forming the large diameter of the teardrop shape and a second end 32 secured to the first lateral sidewall 18 adjacent the upper end of the compartment 12 such that the first end 30 extends across the compartment 12 toward the opposed second lateral sidewall 22. In accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention, and with reference to Figure 2, the second end 32 of the biasing member 26 is provided with a connecting leg 33 shaped and dimensioned for attachment to the first lateral sidewall 18.

As with the compartment 12 itself, the biasing member 26 is formed from a resilient plastic, which is folded over to form the teardrop-shaped biasing member 26. The biasing member 26 is sized to be slightly larger than the space between the first and second lateral walls 18, 22, thereby causing resilient energy to be stored within the slightly compressed biasing member 26 as it is squeezed between the first and second lateral sidewalls.

The biasing member 26 provides a resilient effect as it extends between the first and second lateral sidewalls 18, 22 of the compartment 12. As a result of this resilient force, one may insert an article 34 between the first end 30 of the biasing member 26 and the second lateral sidewall 22 of the compartment 12. Once positioned between the biasing member 26 and the second lateral sidewall 22, the resilient energy stored

within the biasing member 26 forces the article 34 against the second lateral sidewall 22 such that the article 34 is retained in a fixed orientation.

Although the biasing member 26 is preferably constructed from a resilient plastic material, the biasing member 26 may be constructed from a variety of materials without departing from the spirit of the present invention.

With reference to Figures 3 and 4, an alternate embodiment 100 including a plurality of compartments 112 is disclosed. With the exception of the fact that the disclosed compartments do not include a front wall, the construction of a device with multiple compartments 112 is identical to the construction of the single compartment apparatus 10 disclosed above with regard to Figure 1.

As all of the compartments 112 making up the apparatus 100 are substantially identical, only the first compartment 112 will be discussed for the purposes of this application. Those skilled in the art will understand that all of the compartments 112 are constructed the same and the following description equally applies to each compartment 112, with adjacent lateral walls 118, 122 of adjacent compartments 112 being integrally formed.

The compartment 112 includes a base wall 114, sidewalls 116, 118, 122 and an open upper end 124. The compartment 112 is shaped and dimensioned to sit upon a horizontal support surface 128. Although a particular shape is disclosed in accordance

with a preferred embodiment of the present invention, the compartment 112 may be configured in a variety of shapes without departing from the spirit of the present invention.

The present invention further includes a resilient biasing member 126 contained within the compartment 112. The resilient biasing member 126 is teardrop-shaped in cross section and can vary in shape. The biasing member 126 extends from the open forward portion of the compartment 112 to the rear sidewall 116 of the compartment 112.

The biasing member 126 includes a free first end 130 forming the large diameter of the teardrop shape and a second end 132 secured to the first lateral sidewall 118 adjacent the upper end of the compartment 112 such that the first end 130 extends across the compartment 112 toward the opposed second lateral sidewall 112. The biasing member 126 provides a resilient effect as it extends between the first and second lateral sidewalls 118, 122 of the compartment 122. As a result of this resilient force, one may insert an article 134 between the first end 130 of the biasing member 126 and the second lateral sidewall 122 of the compartment 112. Once positioned between the biasing member 126 and the second lateral sidewall 122, the resilient energy stored within the biasing member 126 forces the article against the second lateral sidewall 122 such that the article 134 is retained in a fixed orientation.

While the preferred embodiments have been shown and described, it will be understood that there is no intent to limit the invention by such disclosure, but rather, is intended to cover all modifications and alternate constructions falling within the spirit and scope of the invention.